Preface

This book was born from a deep commitment to the values of deliberation (musyawarah) and mutual cooperation (gotong royong) that have long been integral to Indonesian civic life. As an educator, researcher, and civic practitioner, I have witnessed firsthand how these values can transform not only the dynamics of classrooms, but also the character of communities.

In an increasingly polarized and individualistic world, the need to reimagine civic education is more urgent than ever. Traditional methods that prioritize rote learning or abstract knowledge have proven inadequate in preparing students for active and empathetic participation in public life. Through this book, I seek to present an alternative: a pedagogical framework rooted in collective reasoning and collaborative action.

The ideas presented here are grounded in both theoretical insights and practical experiences. Over the years, I have worked with students, fellow educators, and communities across Indonesia to develop civic learning projects that emphasize authentic participation and public engagement. The book reflects not only academic research but also the aspirations and voices of those involved in these practices.

This English edition is offered with the hope of contributing to global conversations on democratic education. While the examples come from Indonesia, the values of deliberation and cooperation are universal. I believe that educators and civic actors across the world can adapt and build upon the principles outlined in this book to suit their own cultural and social contexts.

I am grateful to all my colleagues, students, and community partners who have inspired and supported this journey. May this book serve as a modest contribution toward nurturing democratic citizens who are capable, compassionate, and committed to the common good.

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Introduction

Background

The learning of deliberation (musyawarah) is a crucial aspect that should be thoughtfully constructed and implemented within educational settings—schools, communities, and families. The importance of deliberation-based learning can be understood from at least three perspectives: philosophical-ideological, practical, and theoretical.

Musyawarah is a key characteristic of Indonesia’s Pancasila democracy, explicitly expressed in its fourth principle: “Democracy guided by the

inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives." The essence of Pancasila democracy is a guided democracy—not led by individuals, institutions, or capital—but by wisdom. In Indonesian society, deliberation often takes place at the grassroots level and is then brought into representative institutions for juridical decision-making (Tjakawerdaja, Soedarno, & Lenggono, 2016).

However, Pancasila democracy faces two major threats: (1) liberal democracy dominated by market fundamentalism and strategic communication led by capital interests (Agustam, 2011), and (2) religious fundamentalism that interprets religious absolutes in exclusive ways, sidelining plural perspectives (Hilmy, 2015).

Practically, several schools have begun involving students in real-world community programs, such as Bedol Desa in Malang and project-based implementations in Probolinggo (Margono & Sudirman, 2016). These have the potential to develop students' deliberative capacity through genuine participation in community problem-solving.

Theoretically, deliberation learning is often confined to classroom settings, where students simulate discussions about public issues. However, this tends to be overly simplified and sometimes artificial, lacking real impact on students' civic capabilities. Recent studies suggest that civic capability is best formed when students engage in real deliberations beyond the classroom—interacting with citizens, local government, and stakeholders (e.g., Cooper, 2008; Fonseca & Bujanda, 2011; Longo, 2013; Nishiyama, 2017).

Mutual cooperation (gotong royong) is the next logical step following deliberation. Once a public decision is made through musyawarah, it must be realized through joint action. Gotong royong, therefore, represents collaborative action, while musyawarah emphasizes communicative action (Habermas, 1984). Many educational practices remain at the level of communication, rarely reaching collaborative implementation.

Educational research in collaborative learning has begun moving toward action-oriented models (e.g., Bilimoria et al., 2010; Fonseca & Bujanda, 2011; Clark & Gakuru, 2014). However, these models still often remain limited to intra-student activities and lack integration with broader social movements. Thus, this book argues for an integrated model that combines deliberative and cooperative learning as a single educational pathway toward social transformation.

Students' civic capability goes beyond knowledge and attitudes. Research shows that students who are actively engaged in organizations—whether civic, student-based, or political—develop stronger civic competencies (Margono, Habibi & Sudirman, 2018). These include teamwork, task commitment, empathy, punctuality, confidence, and openness to diversity (Birdwell, Scott & Horley, 2013).

Such capabilities emerge through a blend of deliberative and cooperative

learning in community-based civic projects. By immersing students in the full cycle—from identifying public issues, deliberating with community members, to implementing collaborative actions—this model cultivates students not only as thinkers but also as active citizens.

Deliberation Learning

The term "deliberation learning" (pembelajaran musyawarah) refers to a pedagogical approach that prioritizes collective reasoning and mutual agreement over mere discussion or debate. While it shares dialogic elements with educational methods such as group discussions and debates, deliberation learning is distinct in its goal: reaching consensus on public issues through inclusive and respectful engagement.

In the global literature, this approach aligns with what is often called deliberative pedagogy—a model that integrates deliberative dialogue, democratic education, and community engagement. According to Longo (2013), deliberative pedagogy connects decision-making with learning, contrasting it with deliberative politics which links decision-making to public action. In this way, deliberative pedagogy bridges academic education and social transformation.

Deliberative learning takes place not only in classrooms but also in public forums and community gatherings. A well-known historical example is the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, established in 1932 by Myles Horton. This school pioneered educational programs for labor and civil rights movements and continues to use deliberative pedagogy for addressing contemporary social issues such as environmental justice and immigrant rights.

Modern implementations, such as those at Michigan State University and Jane Addams School in Minnesota, demonstrate that deliberative learning can empower students to experience democracy firsthand. These institutions offer community-based learning environments where students collaborate with peers, faculty, and local citizens to identify problems and co-create solutions.

Crucial to deliberative learning is the act of deliberative discussion—purposeful, reflective discourse that seeks a shared decision. However, research by Goodin and Stein (2008) cautions that short-term deliberative sessions may not significantly improve critical thinking skills, which typically develop over extended periods of repeated practice.

Effective deliberation learning often involves teachers acting as facilitators, guiding student dialogue by framing relevant issues and ensuring respectful engagement. According to Ibrahim (2015), such facilitation increases student motivation and fosters authentic learning experiences, particularly when discussions are grounded in real-life contexts and personal experiences.

Furthermore, deliberative pedagogy positions students not just as learners but as current and capable democratic actors. Children and youth, often seen merely as future citizens, can actively participate in democratic processes through forums such as youth parliaments and community planning. Nishiyama (2017) argues that children's unique contributions to deliberative systems should be recognized, even if they do not yet influence official policy.

Social spaces, including digital media and informal peer networks, provide important venues for deliberation. Children's participation in social media campaigns or even protest actions can serve as triggers for broader public debate. Although they may not hold voting power, their voices can reshape public opinion and inspire adult reflection.

In sum, deliberation learning involves much more than classroom discussions. It is a civic practice that cultivates democratic competence, emotional intelligence, and public reasoning. It requires sustained exposure, real-world engagement, and a belief in the capacity of every learner—regardless of age—to contribute meaningfully to society.

Mutual Cooperation Learning

Mutual cooperation learning (pembelajaran gotong royong) builds upon deliberation learning by moving from shared decision-making to shared implementation. Once consensus has been achieved through deliberation, students are expected to carry out real actions in cooperation with their peers and community stakeholders. This stage emphasizes collaborative action—a practical embodiment of the shared values and commitments formed during deliberation.

In educational theory, mutual cooperation learning is closely related to collaborative learning and cooperative learning. However, it is distinct in that it centers on concrete social action and the co-execution of real community projects, rather than merely the exchange of ideas or group-based classroom tasks.

A number of studies highlight the critical factors that influence the success of mutual cooperation in education. For instance, Japar (2016) studied co-design between teachers and students in selecting reading materials and assignments. The results showed high levels of student engagement and responsibility, though initial discomfort and group dynamics posed challenges. This suggests that mutual cooperation requires not only collaboration but also structured support and shared leadership.

Research by Acharya and Sinha (2018) further emphasizes the importance of group composition in collaborative work. They recommend forming mixed groups that combine students with similar learning styles but differing levels of knowledge. Attention must also be given to social bonds—such as friendship and mutual trust—to enhance cohesion and cooperation.

Technological platforms, including social media, also play a significant role in fostering cooperative learning. According to Sarwar et al. (2018), perceptions of usefulness, ease of access, and comfort with digital tools positively affect students' participation and learning outcomes in collaborative environments. These digital tools can help bridge physical distances, increase accessibility, and provide students with opportunities to co-create and reflect on their shared learning experiences.

Importantly, mutual cooperation learning is not limited to academic settings. Bilimoria et al. (2010) and Clark & Gakuru (2014) demonstrated that community-oriented programs—particularly those addressing health, gender, and development issues—can significantly enhance learners' confidence, empathy, and sense of social responsibility.

The educational impact of mutual cooperation also includes emotional and cognitive development. According to Degotardi (2017), joint attention—shared focus between young children and educators—builds early cognitive and language skills through sustained interaction. Similarly, Taylor, McGrath-Champ, and Clarkeburn (2012) found that team-based learning supported by podcasts enhances flexibility, problem-solving, and academic preparation.

To ensure effective mutual cooperation learning, educators must develop structured opportunities for teamwork, community engagement, and experiential reflection. This includes co-designing action plans with students, facilitating real-world service learning, and promoting team accountability and self-assessment.

Ultimately, mutual cooperation learning translates civic ideals into lived experience. It nurtures practical civic capabilities such as taking initiative, negotiating responsibilities, respecting diverse roles, and working toward collective goals. As such, it completes the cycle initiated by deliberation, forming a comprehensive approach to educating active, empathetic, and capable citizens.

Civic Capability

Civic capability refers to the real freedom and practical capacity of individuals—especially students—to participate meaningfully in public life. It is not merely about civic knowledge or attitudes, but encompasses the ability to think critically, act collectively, and influence decisions that affect one's community. This concept is rooted in the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen and further adapted to civic education by scholars such as Hoskins and Mascherini (2009).

In the context of this book, civic capability is viewed as a dynamic and context-sensitive outcome of two interrelated processes: deliberation and mutual cooperation. Students develop civic capability when they are given opportunities to:

1. Recognize public issues relevant to their community,
2. Participate in deliberative dialogues to explore these issues with others,
3. Collaboratively take action based on shared decisions, and
4. Reflect on the results of their actions and the learning they gained.

This process enables students to grow as active citizens with both the confidence and competence to influence the common good.

Civic capability also includes emotional and interpersonal dimensions, such as empathy, tolerance, patience, and humility. These qualities are particularly nurtured in cooperative and inclusive settings where students must engage with diverse perspectives and work through differences.

Schools that foster civic capability often adopt participatory structures—student councils, class forums, peer mediation groups, or project-based learning teams. However, true civic capability is not automatically developed through these structures. What matters is the depth of participation and the authenticity of the problems students address.

Research indicates that civic capability increases when students engage with real-world challenges that matter to them, collaborate with people from various backgrounds, and experience that their voices and efforts can lead to visible changes (Margono, 2018). For instance, when students are involved in redesigning a public space, assisting in local health campaigns, or conducting participatory research with residents, they not only learn about democracy but practice it.

Civic capability thus represents the culmination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and agency. It reflects a learner's ability to understand public life, engage ethically, and contribute constructively. In the framework of this book, civic capability is the outcome that emerges when deliberative and cooperative learning are integrated in context-rich, participatory civic education.

Project-Based Practice

Project-based practice is the embodiment of deliberative and cooperative learning within real community settings. It allows students to engage directly with public issues through structured projects that require both critical thinking and collective action.

In Indonesia, various models have emerged where students take part in community initiatives that promote civic engagement. For example, in the city of Malang, the Bedol Desa project enables students to live temporarily in a village to collaboratively identify local problems and propose solutions alongside villagers. Rather than simulating civic tasks in the classroom, students experience the realities of public life.

Another example comes from urban communities in East Java, where students

worked with residents to renovate a neighborhood meeting post (pos ronda) or to organize waste management systems. These projects often begin with a deliberative meeting involving students, residents, and local leaders to identify shared concerns. The group then co-designs an action plan and implements it through mutual cooperation.

The key features of such project-based practices include:

1. Issue identification – guided by the students' own observation and community input.
2. Deliberation and negotiation – facilitated discussions to reach shared understanding.
3. Joint action – implementation of projects through collaborative labor.
4. Reflection and documentation – critical review of the process and outcomes.

These projects are not only educational but transformative. They provide space for students to practice leadership, empathy, problem-solving, and resilience. They also foster mutual respect and solidarity between youth and other community members.

To be effective, project-based practice should be grounded in the local context. Educators play a critical role in helping students connect the values of musyawarah and gotong royong with democratic theories and global civic challenges. Moreover, schools and universities should build partnerships with communities to ensure that projects are meaningful and sustainable.

Ultimately, project-based practice represents the full integration of civic learning, where deliberation and cooperation meet public problem-solving. It is here that students evolve from passive learners into civic actors who are able to contribute to democratic life with both competence and compassion.

Conclusion

This book has argued that civic education must go beyond abstract instruction and passive memorization. It must be rooted in lived experience, grounded in local values such as musyawarah (deliberation) and gotong royong (mutual cooperation), and oriented toward cultivating civic capabilities that empower learners to contribute meaningfully to society.

Deliberation learning fosters communicative action, equipping students with the skills to engage in inclusive, respectful public discourse. Mutual cooperation learning promotes collaborative action, enabling students to act collectively and responsibly in solving real-world problems. Together, these two forms of learning form the foundation for civic capability—the freedom and ability to participate fully in democratic life.

The integration of deliberative and cooperative learning through project-

based practices provides a powerful pedagogical model. It creates authentic learning environments where students think, decide, act, and reflect alongside community members. These experiences not only reinforce academic knowledge but also build empathy, confidence, resilience, and a deep sense of public responsibility.

In an age of increasing polarization, disinformation, and democratic fatigue, civic education that emphasizes deliberation and cooperation offers a hopeful path forward. It affirms the capacity of every learner to become an agent of change—grounded in local wisdom, guided by democratic values, and connected to the broader challenges of our time.

Let this be an invitation to educators, policymakers, and civic leaders worldwide to rethink civic education as a living, participatory, and transformative endeavor. The future of democracy depends not only on the systems we build, but on the citizens we nurture.

References

[See full references in the manuscript's final section as compiled in the canvas document.]